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ABSTRACT

The status projections of high school sophomores residing in rural East Texas were surveyed in spring of 1972. Focus was on their aspirations and expectations for status attainment in occupation, education, income, and type of place of residence. In each area, four elements of status projections were examined: aspiration level, expectation level, certainty of expectation, and intensity of aspiration. A small-scale investigation of the observations made in the initial study was later conducted with 11 respondents from a school where the interview situation had been far from ideal. This study evaluated observation reliability, in terms of consistency of responses, through a "test-retest" procedure over a 2-week time lapse. Data were collected via the same group-administered questionnaire used in the initial study. Among the findings were: (1) variation in response, in terms of initial coded measurements, was relatively high across all status areas, except for status object of aspirations; and (2) generally, indicators for all elements of educational status projections were more stable than those of other status areas. The general intent of this study was to produce some reasonable hypotheses for additional and broader research since the limited sample does not allow for generalizations. (NQ)

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RELIABILITY OF YOUTH'S RESPONSES ON THEIR STATUS PROJECTIONS: A TEST-RETEST EVALUATION IN DEPTH.*

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INTRODUCTION

Although much research has been done on status projections of adolescents among sociologists since the 1940's, little has been done to investigate the quality of observations and measurements obtained on these phenomena over this rather long period of time.[1] The amount of research activity in this problem area has grown tremendously over the past ten years and continues to increase. A number of Rural Sociologists in the South are involved in this research and a large number of graduate students in Rural Sociology have done or will do their graduate research in this problem area. Yet, we know very little about the quality of the observations and measurements used to tap and represent the status projection elements of youth. Does one mode of observation produce more accurate or more detailed information than another? Regardless of mode of observation, what kind of reliability do observations obtained and measures constructed for these have? Do the answers to these first two questions vary by circumstances of the interview, by attributes of the subject, or by attributes of the interviewer?

The lack of good answers for the questions posed above does raise important questions about the quality and significance of the general research accumulated in this problem area. An assessment of the quality of observations and measurements of status projections elements needs to be made now! The purpose of this paper is to help stimulate such activity by reporting on a small-scale investigation of the reliability of observations made of the status projections of eleven sophomores from an East Texas high school through the means of a "test-retest" procedure over a two week time lapse. While information on only eleven subjects from one school in one county of one state does not allow one to generalize, such a limited exploration can produce some reasonable hypotheses to stimulate additional and broader research. This is our general intent here.

Our specific research objective was to evaluate in detail the reliability, in terms of consistency in responses, over a two-week test-retest period. The variables focused on were youth's aspirations and expectations for status attainment in reference to occupation, education, income, and type of place of residence. The data were collected from group-administered questionnaires. In each status area four elements of status projections were examined: type or level of status involved in aspiration and expectation, certainty of expectation, and intensity of aspiration.[2]

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RESEARCH OPERATIONS

In the Spring of 1972 we were involved in a survey of status projections of high school sophomores residing in rural East Texas as part of a larger interstate cooperative effort being done in the southern region (S-81). We decided to do a small scale test-retest evaluation of our operations and measures. I asked my interviewers (Dave Wright and Randy Dowdell) to select a school that they judged to be one of the poorer administrations of our instruments and to readminister them to a 10% sample of the subjects interviewed there after a time lapse of two weeks. My reasoning in selecting a "poorer" initial administration was to assure us of obtaining maximum vs. minimum potential variability in responses. They selected an interview situation that was far from ideal: 97 students gathered in a large gym. The interviewers did not have a mike, the principal entered and left several times, and the students became so noisy that at one point the interview was halted so the interviewer could make a plea for cooperation.

The interviewer reports of the T_1 and T_2 interview situations clearly suggest that T_2 represented a much superior interview situation--a smaller group, less noise and interruptions, the subjects were very cooperative, a more comfortable physical environment, and a shorter time span (50 minutes as compared with 60 minutes at T_1). Obviously, the dramatic variation in the context of the interviews might introduce some variation in subject responses. The interviewers duplicated as exactly as possible the same operations at T_2 as were used at T_1. Exactly the same questionnaire was "group-administered" in both cases: the interviewer read the stimulus questions aloud while the subjects followed along and responded to them.

The eleven respondents were purposively selected to assure representation of respondents of each sex in three ethnic categories (Table 1). Actually, the prinicpal in the high school selected the subjects for the T_2 administration in terms of the ethnic-sex categories we provided. He was asked to provide us with subjects of varying abilities and backgrounds. An examination of the SES and other family characteristics of the eleven subjects selected indicated that he generally did this (See Appendix A). It would appear that the principal did, however, select for us minority students with relatively high prestige fathers (in terms of occupational status).

The instruments and measures representing the status projection elements being focused on here are part of a standardized questionnaire used by all states collaborating in southern regional projects S-61 and S-81 (USDA-CSRS). The stimulus questions utilized are provided in Appendix B and will be discussed in more detail later at appropriate places in description of the analysis and findings.

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Table 1. Subjects Used in Investigation By Ethnicity and Sex.

Ethnicity	Male	Female	Total
	No.		
Black	1	2	3
Mexican American	1	2	3
Anglo	3	2	5
Total	5	6	11

Table 2. Frequency of Changed Responses on Status Projections by Eleven Subjects Over a Two Week Time Lapse.

Projection Element	Status Area				
	Occupation	Education	Income	Place of Residence	Mean Change
	No. of Changed Responses				
Aspiration	3	2	2	3	2.5
Expectation	5	3	6	5	4.75
Intensity of Aspiration	7	2	7	8	6.0
Certainty of Expectation	5	6	4	3	4.5
Mean Change	5.0	3.25	4.75	4.75	4.4

Projection Element	Percent of Respondents with Changed Responses				
	Occupation	Education	Income	Place of Residence	Average % Change
Aspiration	27	18	18	27	23
Expectation	45	27	55	45	43
Intensity of Aspiration	64	18	64	73	55
Certainty of Expectation	45	55	37	27	41
Average Percent	45	30	43	43	40

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Plan of Analysis

There are three possible sources of variation in response in this "test-retest" situation: (1) the responses are unreliable; (2) the initial treatment produced a change in the subject and; (3) the difference in the nature of the interview situation. We plan to examine the results in enough detail on a case by case basis to permit reasonable inferences about these alternative explanations for any variations observed between the first and second set of observations. When variations are observed we will be looking for any patterns of these which might reflect treatment change or which might lead to implications for improvement of quality of operations or measurements.

First we will provide a brief overview of consistency in responses in terms of initial coded measures across all status projection elements in all four status areas. We will then follow-up with detailed case by case comparisons for each status projection element considered--level of aspiration, level of expectation, certainty of expectation, intensity of aspiration. Each of these elements is measured by different instruments which, however, are patterned in terms of critical words across status areas. All stimulus questions used were of forced-choice response type--providing self-coding response categories--with the exception of open-end type questions used for occupational and income aspiration and expectation levels (See Appendix B).

Overview of Response Variation

A tabulation of response variation from the T_1 to T_2 application of the instruments is presented in Table 2. This overview clearly indicates several general patterns:

(1) Except for status object of aspirations, variation in response in terms of initial coded measurements was relatively high across all status areas. For some reason indications of status aspired to were markedly more stable than was the case for the other three elements, regardless of status area.

(2) Generally speaking, indicators for all elements of educational status projections were more stable than those of other status areas. The one major exception to this statement is in reference to certainty of expectation, in which case education demonstrated the highest level of change (six out of 11 varied).

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On the surface then, the over all picture presented by this overview indicates sizeable variation over the time period. However, this overview does not tell us how substantial these variations were, nor does it provide us with any clues as to why the variations might have taken place. The detailed analysis to follow is intended to provide us with possible answers to these questions.

Status Objects of Aspirations and Expectations

Occupational Projections

Less change was observed for occupational aspirations (3 out of 11) than for expectations (5 out of 11). An examination of particular changes in aspirations indicates that two of three represent changes within what would be usually labeled a "high" level of prestige: both changed from a "glamor type" choice to some other high prestige position (Table 3). The third change involved a more detailed response at T_2. In summary, changes in occupational aspiration responses in terms of prestige measurement were few and slight.

The more frequent changes in occupational expectation responses were of several different kinds. Two of the five changes involved getting "no information" at one time or the other. One involved obtaining a more specific response at T_2 of the same kind received at T_1. Another case involved a qualitative change between two intermediate level prestige jobs--computer data worker and insurance salesman. The remaining case demonstrated a marked qualitative shift ("homemaker" to "R.N."). In summary, at least three of these five changes in coded measures represent important, marked variations in response.

An examination of all the actual "raw responses" provided by the respondent in reference to occupational aspirations not found to demonstrate a change in code value indicates a rather strong tendency for the responses to become more specific or for more detail to be given (Table 4). It is clear that this pattern did not occur in reference to responses for occupational expectations. The tendency for increasing specificity and detail in the "stable" aspiration responses might be due to either the difference in the interview situation (i.e., many fewer respondents in the group being interviewed at T_2) or, more likely to a "treatment effect" at T_1 instigating thought on status desires on the part of the respondents. At the same time, one can not help be puzzled at the lack of a similar pattern in reference to expectation responses. One possible inference is that youth at this age tend to dwell more on status desires than on status expectations. Another possibility is that because aspirations are more subject to personal control than espectations the subjects may have a stronger basis for more rapid crystallization of aspirations than expectations. These explanations would also fit with the markedly higher stability of the aspiration measure as compared with that for expectation observed above.

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Table 3. Description of Changed Responses to Job Aspirations and Expectations of Subjects Over a Two Week Period and Interpretation of Changes.

	T_1 (First Contact)		T_2 (Second Contact)		Interpretation of Change From T_1 to T_2
A. Aspirations					
Resp. No.	Code	Raw Response	Code	Raw Response	
74	(0)	(No Information)	(3)	"Artis"	Substantial.
64	(3)	"Professional Basketball Player"	(1)	"Sociologist"	Qualitative Change at high prestige level.
67	(3)	"Professional Football Player"	(4)	"Owner"	Qualitative change at high level - downward shift in prestige.
B. Expectations					
Resp. No.	Code	Raw Response	Code	Raw Response	
92	(9)	"Being a Homemaker"	(2)	"To be a R.N."	Qualitative shift; upward in prestige.
49	(8)	"Working for the Texas A&M agriculture farm"	(6)	"Working on the Texas A&M agriculture farm as a foreman"	More specific; coded upward.
79	(2)	"To deal with these new computers and data machines"	(5)	"An insurance salesman"	Qualitative change.
74	(0)	(No Information)	(3)	"Artis"	Substantial.
67	(5)	"Salesman"	(0)	(No Information)	Substantial.

Table 4. Comparison of Raw Responses on Type of Occupational Aspiration and Expectations Among those Subjects not Judged to Have Changed in T_1 and T_2 Coded Measures.

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Resp. No.	T_1 (First Contact) Code	T_1 Raw Response	T_2 (Second Contact) Code	T_2 Raw Response	Variations: T_1 to T_2
A. Aspirations					
92	(2)	Nurse (RN)	(2)	To be a RN (Nurse)	None
49	(2)	High Sch. Ag. Teacher	(2)	Teach in High School as Voc. Agr.	None
88	(1)	Geology	(1)	Geologist	None
79	(2)	Computer technician	(2)	A computer technician dealing with IBM and data machines.	More detail
83	(2)	Nursing	(2)	A Head Nursing	More specific, increase in prestige
28	(5)	Secretary	(5)	Secretary in an office	More detail
02	(5)	Office work	(5)	Be an office worker in a small business	More detail
07	(2)	I'd like to be a registered nurse	(2)	A registered nurse	None
B. Expectations					
88	(1)	Ceologist	(1)	Geology	None
83	(9)	Housewife	(9)	A housewife job	None
28	(5)	Secretary	(5)	Secretary	None
02	(5)	I hope to have an office job	(5)	I hope and expect an office job	None
07	(2)	A Registered Nurse	(2)	A Registered Nurse	None
64	(1)	Sociologist	(1)	Sociologist	None

Educational Projections

The respondents were asked to indicate their educational aspirations and expectations by circling one of seven precoded response alternatives ranging from (1) "Quite high school and never go to school again" to (7) "Complete additional studies after graduating from a college or university" (See Appendix B).

The level of agreement between T_1 and T_2 responses was relatively high in reference to both aspirations and expectations (Table 5). In one of the two aspiration changes and in two out of the three expectation changes, the variation was of only one level. The three remaining changes in aspiration and expectation were marked. Both the marked expectation changes involved a shift sharply downward in reference to educational attainment levels, indicating that a possible "treatment effect" was experienced.

In conclusion, the status object specifications for educational aspirations and expectations demonstrated a high degree of stability and appear to have high reliability.

Income Aspirations and Expectations

A pair of open-end stimulus questions were used to obtain responses indicating the level of income the subjects aspired to and actually expected (See Appendix B). We have examined their actual "raw responses," given in terms of dollars of annual income, for this analysis (Table 6). Again, it can be easily observed that the level of income provided for aspiration varied little--only one of these variations represented a major change in level of income. Consequently, it can be concluded that level of income aspiration was very stable and reliable over the two week study period.

An examination of responses in reference to expectations clearly indicates a converse pattern to the one noted above for aspirations. Six of the eleven cases demonstrated marked change from T_1 to T_2: four of these were characterized by a dramatic upward shift in expected income levels, ranging from $19,000 to $80,000 per year. Quite obviously, one must conclude that the income expectation varied dramatically over the two week period. The T_1 responses appear on the surface to be more realistic and, therefore, better indicators of actual anticipated status attainment. Why this should be so is puzzling to us.

Place of Residence Projections

The stimulus questions used for place of residence aspirations and expectations incorporated a forced-choice technique providing type of residence categories involving two dimensions of variation--type of place (mainly size) and proximity of location to a city (See Appendix B).

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Table 5. Description of Educational Levels Specified for Aspirations and Expectations by Subjects Demonstrating Change over Two Week Period and Amount of Change.

	Responses of Subjects Indicating Change		
	T_1 (First Contact)	T_2 (Second Contact)	Change: T_1 to T_2
	----------Responses Given* ----------		
A. Aspirations			
Resp. No.			
49	6	5	-1 Level
02	4	6	+2 Levels
B. Expectations			
Resp. No.			
49	6	5	-1 Level
83	7	4	-3 Levels
02	3	4	+1 Level

*A description of the code used for these responses follows:
0 = No Information; 1 = Quit high school; 2 = Quit high school and vocational training; 3 = Graduate from high school; 4 = High school graduate and vocational training; 5 = Graduate from Jr. College; 6 = College graduate; 7 = Additional studies after college graduation.

A complete description is provided in Appendix B.

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Table 6. Description of Income Specified for Aspirations and Expectations of Subjects Indicating Change Over Two Week Period and Interpretation of Changes.

	T_1 (First Contact)	T_2 (Second Contact)	Change: T_1 to T_2	Change: T_1 to T_2
A. Aspirations				
Resp. No.	Response	Response		
92	$45,000	$50,000	+$5,000	Small change.
28	4,000	8,000	+$4,000	Dramatic change.
B. Expectations				
Resp. No.				
92	$ 6,000	$25,000	+$19,000	Dramatic
79	15,000	10,000	-$ 5,000	Substantial
74	9,000	2,900	-$ 6,100	Dramatic
02	2,000	30,000	+$28,000	Dramatic
64	25,000	75,000	+$50,000	Dramatic
07	10,000	90,000	+$80,000	Dramatic

Again, aspirations were found to demonstrate less variation over the two week period than expectations (Table 7). Six of the eight variations noted were in reference to type (size) of place, and in every instance T_2 demonstrated a choice for a smaller place than indicated at T_1. Little variation took place in reference to location relative to proximity to a city.

In summary, responses relative to the "proximity to a city" dimension were very stable from T_1 to T_2. Variation in reference to type of place was frequent, particularly in reference to expectations, but was consistently patterned in that T_2 choices were always indicative of smaller places than T_1 choices. Again, the consistency of patterning of change would indicate a possible "treatment effect."

Certainty of Expectations

The degree of certainty associated with the respondents' expectation for achievement in each status area were obtained from similarly worded forced-choice stimulus questions placed immediately after the question asking for a description of the anticipated status in each case (See Appendix B). The response categories ranged along a continuum from (1) "Very sure" to (5) "Very uncertain."

Considerable variation in measures of certainty of expectation took place over the four status areas between the first and second contact (Table 8). Certainty of place of residence expectations demonstrated the highest rate of stability among the four types and education the lowest. Strong patterns emerged in several status areas in terms of direction of change. For educational status, all the changes in certainty were positive, that is, respondents became more certain of attaining their educational expectations. Four of these six changes represented identical shifts from "Sure" (2) to "Very sure" (1). Changes in certainty with respect to income expectations, on the other hand, were almost all negative; respondents became less certain of attaining their income expectations. Changes in certainty of expectations for occupational and residence expectations were not patterned.

When changes are examined for each status area, it becomes clear that the majority of changes were shifts of only one level: only two respondents indicated a shift of as much as two code levels. In the educational status area one respondent shifted from "Very uncertain" to "Not very sure" (2 levels) and one subject shifted two levels for the income status area, from "Not very sure" to "Very certain."

Excluding the patterned shift observed in increased certainty relative to educational expectations, half of all remaining changes across the three other types of expectations involved a switch between the "Not very sure" and Uncertain" response categories. An obvious inference to be

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Table 7. Description of Types of Residence Indicated for Aspirations and Expectations of Subjects Demonstrating Change and Interpretation of Change.

	T_1 (First Contact)	T_2 (Second Contact)	Change: T_1 to T_2	
			Size of Place	Proximity to City
A. Aspirations*				
Resp. No.				
92	Very Large City	Small City	Smaller	0
74	Very Large City	Small City	Smaller	0
02	Farm - near a city	Farm - not near a city	0	Further away
B. Expectations*				
Resp. No.				
92	Very Large City	Small City	Smaller	0
79	T or V - not near a city	T or V - near a city	0	Closer to
74	Small City	T or V - near a city	Smaller	0
83	T or V - near a city	Country - near a city	Smaller	0
02	Small City	Farm - near a city	Smaller	0

*The instrument was constructed to measure two dimensions of residence aspirations and expectations - size of place and location relative to a city.

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Table 8. Change in Certainty of Expectations Among Respondents Demonstrating Changes Over Two Week Period.

Status Area	T_1 (First Contact)	T_2 (Second Contact)	Change from T_1 to T_2	
			Direction	Degree
	----------Responses----------			
Occupation				
Resp. No.				
92	(3) Not very sure	(2) Sure	+	1
49	(3) Not very sure	(4) Uncertain	-	1
74	(4) Uncertain	(3) Not very sure	+	1
64	(2) Sure	(1) Very sure	+	1
67	(2) Sure	(0) No information	?	?
Education				
92	(2) Sure	(1) Very sure	+	1
49	(3) Not very sure	(2) Sure	+	1
28	(2) Sure	(1) Very sure	+	1
02	(5) Very Uncertain	(3) Not very sure	+	2
64	(2) Sure	(1) Very sure	+	1
67	(2) Sure	(1) Very sure	+	1
Income				
88	(3) Not very sure	(4) Uncertain	-	1
74	(4) Uncertain	(3) Not very sure	+	1
02	(3) Not very sure	(5) Very uncertain	-	2
67	(3) Not very sure	(4) Uncertain	?	1
Place of Residence				
88	(3) Not very sure	(2) Sure	+	1
74	(4) Uncertain	(3) Not very sure	+	1
64	(1) Very sure	(2) Sure	-	1

drawn from this observation is that the subjects could not consistently distinguish these two labels. If these two categories are combined into one there are substantial reductions in frequency of change for each status area except education: three of the five changes in certainty of occupational expectations drop out, three of the four changes in certainty of income expectations drop out, as does one of three changes in certainty of residence expectations.

In conclusion, most of the variation noted in response to certainty of expectations over the two contacts was due either to probable treatment effect (education) or the unclear distinction between the two intermediate response categories "Not very sure" and "Uncertain."

Intensity of Aspirations

The conceptual element involved here refers to the degree of intensity of attachment that the individual maintains for the status goal specified for a particular aspiration. The indicator used is composed of seven goals--including all the status areas involved here-- and is accompanied by a question that asks the respondent to rank numerically the relative importance to him or her of the attainment of these goals (See Appendix B). This produced a range of rank scores from one to seven: the lower the rank score the status area receives, the higher the intensity of aspiration for the goal he specifies in that area (i.e., a rank score of "1" indicated highest intensity).

Except for the educational status area, the majority of the respondents in each status area indicated changes in intensity of aspirations over the two week period (Table 9). Only two respondents indicated changes in their intensity of educational aspirations, while seven did so for occupational and income aspirations, and eight did for the place of residence area.

The changes in intensity of aspiration for education and income were, with one exception, all in a positive direction: respondents indicating shifts over the two week period changed to higher intensities of desire for these goals. In the occupational and place of residence status areas, changes were mixed between positive and negative shifts.

The magnitude of the changes were not severe, considering that the possible range of change was six levels, and in only one case was there a shift of as much as three levels (a single respondent shifted three levels in the income status area). The majority of changes were movements of only one level, though there were a sizable number of two-level shifts.

If the data are collapsed into a three level scheme of intensity of aspiration, which has been used frequently in the past, (High = 1 and 2; Medium = 3, 4, and 5; Low = 6 and 7) many of the changes disappear.[3]

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Table 9. Change in Intensity of Aspiration Measures Among Subjects Demonstrating Change Over Two Week Period.

Status Areas	T_1 (1st Contact)	T_2 (2nd Contact)	Change	
	Goal Ranks (1-7)		Direction	Levels of Rank
Occupational: (7 Changes)				
Resp. No.				
49	3	2	+	1
79	3	2	+	1
74	6	4	+	2
83	4	5	-	1
28	1	2	-	1
64	2	3	-	1
67	2	1	+	1
Educational: (2 Changes)				
28	3	1	+	2
83	2	1	+	1
Income: (7 Changes)				
49	5	4	+	1
88	7	5	+	2
79	2	3	-	1
74	3	2	+	1
07	7	4	+	3
64	6	4	+	2
~~76~~67	4	3	+	1
Place of Residence: (8 Changes)				
92	4	5	-	1
49	4	5	-	1
79	5	7	-	2
74	3	5	-	2
83	5	3	+	2
28	5	3	+	2
07	4	5	-	1
64	3	2	+	1

All but one of the eight changes in intensity of residence aspiration drop out under this scheme, and three of the seven changes in intensity of occupational aspiration also drop out. One of the two changes in intensity of educational aspiration and two of the seven in intensity of income aspiration also disappear.

In conclusion, when the three level scheme is employed the intensity measures appear very reliable, with no noticeable treatment effect, for education and residence aspiration. For occupational and income aspirations however, there is relatively low level of reliability (four respondents indicating changes for occupation and five for income). To what extent treatment effect and/or the difference in administration at T_1 and T_2, is involved is indeterminable, given the limitations of the data.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

We believe that to fully understand and appreciate our findings the reader should study the detailed description of findings for each indicator presented in the body of the paper. Given the small number of cases involved in this investigation it is impossible to summarize in a numerical manner without running the risk of over-stating or misleading. Consequently, we will only briefly highlight our major findings and inferences here. We will organize this discussion in terms of the four elements of status projections considered. Suggestions for improvement of indicators, measures, or operations based on our inferences from the findings will be offered as a part of each of these segments.

Status Object of Aspiration

Across all four status areas considered the very high consistency of response observed leads to the conclusion that our measures were very reliable. Most of the small number of changes observed in response indicated rather small adjustments in level of aspiration or were probable treatment effects.

Status Object of Expectation

Consistency in response varied widely by status area in reference to specification of status attainment anticipated. Responses demonstrated good consistency in reference to educational expectations leading us to conclude our measures had good reliability in this case. Place of residence expectations were highly consistent in reference to "the proximity to city"

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indicator; but, demonstrated a patterned change toward smaller places at T_2, which we suspect is a "treatment effect." On the other hand, expectations for both occupation and income attainment demonstrated relatively high rates of marked variation, leading us to believe that the reliability of these measures should be questioned and examined extensively in future research of this type. In these last two areas, the respondent clearly distinguished between aspirations and expectations in terms of their ability to remain consistent in them over a short two weeks.

Certainty of Expectation

Most of the variations noted in responses indicating degree of certainty associated with expectations were either shifts between intermediate response categories (3) "Not very sure" and (4) "Sure" or part of a totally consistent upward shift in certainty associated with educational expectations. If categories (3) and (4) were combined, the measure of certainty has good reliability. A very high degree of reliability could be obtained by further collapsing as follows: some degree of certainty ((1) and (2)) vs. some degree of uncertainty ((3), (4), and (5)). However, it is the authors' opinion that a good and reliable measure of this element could perhaps be best achieved in future research by a slight adjustment in the instrument: moving from five to four response categories by eliminating category (3) "Not very sure."

Intensity of Aspiration

The initial measure (rank score) indicating degree of intensity of desire for aspiration was found to be of high consistency only in reference to education--it apparently is highly reliable in this regard. Use of a "rank level" measurement scheme involving collapsing of the seven specific ranks into three more inclusive level categories increases reliability for all status areas; however, high rates of disagreement would still exist for occupation and income. In these two cases the reliability of the intensity of aspiration must be questioned. However, the variation in responses here might be due to either "treatment effect" or the difference in T_1 and T_2 interview situations--the direction of change is highly patterned for income and almost always of only one rank unit for occupation.

This is a very complex instrument which is difficult to administer. Probably much of the variability noted here could be eliminated by restructuring the stimulus question to simplify it for the respondent. The scant findings we have here would indicate that one way to do this is to redesign the ranking operation so that the respondent need group his goals into only three levels of valuation--(1) high, (2) intermediate, and (3) low. For instance, while the measure of intensity of occupational

aspiration was deemed suspect here, it can be seen (Table 4) that five of the seven changed responses took place within the top three (1, 2, and 3) rank scores. At any rate, particularly for intensity of occupational aspiration, more work should be given to instrument evaluation.

Patterning By Status Areas

In our judgement all measures related to educational status projections demonstrated high reliability in this research. While certainty of educational expectation demonstrated a number of changes between T_1 and T_2, these were consistently patterned and probably due to "treatment effect" or variation in the interview contexts.

For both occupational and income projections questions were raised about the reliability of measures for both specification of status expected and intensity of aspiration--the former would seem more of a problem than the later. Is it a coincidence that the apparent poorest quality measures are represented by the same two conceptual elements in only two status areas? This is an interesting question which can only be resolved by further research.

Closing Comments

Obviously we hesitate to draw any firm conclusions from this limited work. Neither the "positive" results indicating probable reliability or the "negative" results indicating some measures may be suspect are worth much if these research leads are not followed up systematically to replicate this type of investigation with more diverse populations, involving a larger number of subjects. Our hope is that this effort will stimulate enough questions, dialogue, and interest that this will be done. We have already carried out a similar investigation, involving a larger number of subjects, among Mexican American youth in south Texas and hope to report findings from this soon. But, we need colleagues assistance in broadening the scope of such efforts to increase our power to generalize.

Both this investigation and our later one done in south Texas are limited to two contacts separated by a short time span. Future attempts of this type would be more effective if they involved at least one additional duplicate contact, plus a direct interview follow-up to probe for reasons for change. For instance, how can you explain the puzzling, patterned, dramatic upward shift in income expectation levels? If this turns out to be a general "treatment effect" why does it take place?

Enough probable treatment effects were noted from this investigation to lead us to believe that researchers probing status projections of youth are also probably changing some of these youth. A clear implication of this is that our research instruments and operations may well have "action" utility. If these patterned treatment effects are found to be general and lasting, does it not require us to delve into their substance and significance?

FOOTNOTES

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1. One exception of major significance in reference to this tendency is the rather comprehensive attempt to evaluate a measure of occupational status projections carried out by Haller and Miller. See their monograph, The Occupational Aspiration Scale (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc., 1971).

2. The conceptual scheme from which these conceptual elements were drawn has been described fully in prior publications. Among others see the following:

   George W. Ohlendorf and William P. Kuvlesky, "Racial Differences in the Educational Orientations of Rural Youth," Social Science Quarterly (Sept., 1968):274-275.

   and

   William P. Kuvlesky and John T. Pelham, "Place of Residence Projections Of Rural Youth: A Racial Comparison," Social Science Quarterly (June, 1970):167-168.

3. See among others Ohlendorf and Kuvlesky, op. cit. and Kuvlesky and Pelham, op. cit.

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Appendix A. Characteristics of the Eleven Subjects and their Families.

Ethnicity	Respondent No.	Sex	Age	Place of Residence	Education of Parents: Father	Education of Parents: Mother	Job of Main Breadwinner	Number of Siblings
Black								
	92	F	17	Town/Village	Grade 1-7	Some H.S.	Owner, mgr.	3
	74	F	17	Town/Village	Don't know	Don't know	Skilled trade	8 or more
	64	M	15	Town/Village	H.S. + Voc.	Some H.S.	Laborer	8 or more
Mexican Americans								
	83	F	18	City	Don't know	Don't know	Farm owner or mgr.	6
	23	F	16	Open country	Don't know	Don't know	Owner, mgr.	5
	79	M	16	City	Grade 1-7	Grade 1-7	Skilled trade	8 or more
Anglos								
	02	F	16	Farm	Grade 8	Some H.S.	Laborer	1
	07	F	16	Farm	Some H.S.	H.S. Grad.	Owner, mgr.	3
	49	M	16	Farm	H.S. Grad.	H.S. Grad.	Skilled trade	6
	88	M	15	Town/Village	H.S. + Voc.	Some H.S.	Owner, mgr.	0
	67	M	16	Town/Village	Grade 8	H.S. Grad	Saleswork	1

Appendix B: Instruments

Occupational Status Projections

Aspiration Level

15. (a) If you were completely free to choose any job, what would you most desire as a lifetime kind of work? (In answering this question give an exact job. For example, do not say "work on the railroad" but tell us what railroad job you would like to have.) Write your answer in the box below.

ANSWER: [ ]

Expectation Level

23. (a) What kind of job do you really expect to have most of your life? (Write your answer in the box below. Please give an exact job!)

ANSWER: [ ]

Certainty of Expectation

24. How sure do you feel that this will be the kind of work you will do most of your life? (Circle one number.)

I feel:	1	2	3	4	5
	Very sure	Sure	Not very sure	Uncertain	Very uncertain

Prestige Code Used For Occupational Projections

0 = No information
1 = High professional
2 = Low professional
3 = Glamour
4 = Managerial and Officials
5 = Clerical and sales
6 = Skilled worker
7 = Operative
8 = Laborer
9 = Housewife

Education Status Projections

Aspiration Level

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25. If you could have as much education as you desired and were completely free to choose, which of the following would you do? (Circle only one number.)

1 Quit high school and never go to school again.
2 Quit high school and take some vocational training for a job.
3 Graduate from high school and never go to school again.
4 Graduate from high school and then complete a business, commercial, nurses training, or some other technical school program.
5 Graduate from a junior college.
6 Graduate from a college or university.
7 Complete additional studies after graduating from a college or university.

Expectation Level

31. What do you <u>really expect</u> to do about your education? (Circle only one number.)

1 Quit high school and never go to school again.
2 Quit high school and take some vocational training for a job.
3 Graduate from high school and never go to school again.
4 Graduate from high school and then complete a business, commercial, nurses training, or some other technical school program.
5 Graduate from a junior college.
6 Graduate from a college or university.
7 Complete additional studies after graduating from a college or university.

Certainty of Expectation

32. How sure are you that you will really achieve the education you expect?

I am: (Circle one number.)

1	2	3	4	5
Very sure	Sure	Not very sure	Uncertain	Very uncertain

Place of Residence Status Projections

Aspiration Type

37. Of the kind of places listed below, in which one would you most desire to live for the rest of your life? (Circle only one number.)

In a City
1 Very large
2 Small

Near a City
3 In a town or village
4 In the country but not on a farm
5 On a farm

Not near a City
6 In a town or village
7 In the country but not on a farm
8 On a farm

Expectation Type

38. From the kinds of places listed above, what type of place do you really expect to live most of your life? Place the number of this type of place in the following box: [ ]

Certainty of Expectation

39. How sure are you that you will live in this kind of place?

I am: (Circle one number.)

1	2	3	4	5
Very sure	Sure	Not very sure	Uncertain	Very uncertain

Income Status Projections

Aspiration Level

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26. How much money would you desire to make a year if you could have any amount you desired? (GIRLS: If you plan to marry indicate the amount of money you would like your husband to make.) Place your answer in the following box: | $ _____ a year |

Expectation Level

33. What is the highest yearly income that you really think you will ever be able to make? (GIRLS: If you plan to marry indicate what you think will be the highest yearly income your husband will ever make.) Place your answer in the following box: | $ _____ a year |

Certainty of Expectation

34. How sure are you that this will be the highest income you will ever make?

I am: (Circle one number.)

1	2	3	4	5
Very sure	Sure	Not very sure	Uncertain	Very uncertain

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Intensity of Aspirations - All Status Areas

18. Listed below are a number of things that most young people look forward to. Rank them in order of their importance to you. For the one you think is most important check number 1 in front of it; for the next most important one check number 2, and so on until you have a number checked for each one. Read over the entire list before answering the question. (Check only one number beside each sentence and check each different number only once.)

	Order of Importance to You							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Having lots of free time to do what I want.
(E)	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	To develop my mind and get all the education I want.
(I)	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	To earn as much money as I can.
(O)	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Getting the job I want most.
(PR)	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Living in the kind of place I like best.
	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Having the kind of house, car, furniture, and other things like this I want.
	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	To get married and raise a family.

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS! You should have each number checked only once and a single number should be checked for each statement.

The rank level of valuation given is interpreted as a measure of intensity of desire for the goal specified in the status area. Potential scores range from one to seven and a score of one indicates highest intensity of aspiration.